

BRIEFLY

Tigers kill policeman: Tamil guerrillas yesterday ambushed a police vehicle in eastern Sri Lanka, killing one police constable and wounding six others, local officials said, AFP reports from Colombo.

The police vehicle crashed inside a jungle area after Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas forced it off the road by setting off a powerful explosion in Unanchimadam in coastal Batticaloa district, local officials said.

Russia destroys old ammunition: Russia's 14th Army has started blowing up old ammunition as part of its pullout from the Trans-Dniester area of Moldova, the force's new commander said Friday, AP reports from Kishinev, Moldova.

Maj Gen Valery Yevnevich told the Interfax news agency that experts are starting to explode about 200 obsolete artillery shells a day, but hope to increase the daily number to 1,500.

UN chartered chopper crashes: A helicopter chartered by United Nations development workers crashed on Thursday in a remote Amazonian town in Brazil killing an accompanying Spanish student, a UN official said, Reuters reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The student Antonio Mugica Navas died and two Brazilian UN workers and pilot were seriously injured when the helicopter crashed in the town of Ji Parana, the official said.

Mexico govt-rebels talks end: Zapatista rebels and government envoys ended three days of peace talks on Thursday without agreement on how to end an 18-month-old rebellion in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas, Reuters reports from San Andres Larrainzar.

The two sides instead promised to come back for fresh talks on July 24 with a response to a conciliatory proposal drawn up by mediators of the National Intermediation Commission.

Floods claim one in Assam: The overall flood situation in Assam remained grave on Friday — as vast tracts of land remained under water with 11 districts of the state being affected in the second wave of floods this season, PTI reports from Guwahati.

One person was drowned in Goalpara district on Thursday, being the first casualty in the current wave of floods.

Hirohito's effigy burnt in Taiwan: Demonstrators threw eggs at a Japanese office and burned the late Emperor Hirohito in effigy Friday as Taiwan began a series of commemorations of China's 1937-1945 war with Japan, AP reports from Taipei.

Premier Lien Chan led government officials to the martyrs' Shrine to pay tribute to soldiers killed in the war, calling it "a lingering trauma for the Chinese people." Some 100 people marched through Taipei streets and burned effigies of Hirohito and wartime Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who was hanged as a war criminal in 1948.

3 E Timorese rebels die in clash: Three East Timorese rebels were killed yesterday in an armed clash with Indonesian soldiers, an army officer said, Reuters reports from Dili.

The men, who he said were members of a guerrilla movement seeking independence from Indonesia, were killed in a clash at the Lalenek village in Lautem regency, 200 km (125 miles) east of Dili.

11 die in Iranian road mishap: Eleven people, all passengers in the same car, were killed in a head-on collision with a truck south of Tehran, newspapers reported in Tehran Thursday, AFP says from Tehran.

The victims, including three women and four children, were so badly disfigured they have still not been identified, the paper said, adding that the accident happened on Tuesday near the holy city of Qom, 125 kilometres (77 miles) south of Tehran.

Robbers kill 12 in Mexico: Gunmen robbed and murdered 12 people in a remote mountain town in southwest Mexico, officials said Thursday. Two of the victims were reported to be children, AP reports from Mexico City.

The Wednesday night attack occurred in the state of Guerrero, which has been in political turmoil for the past week over another mass slaying — the police killings of 17 peasants who were members of a radical farmer group.

Quake shakes Tokyo: A moderate earthquake hit the Tokyo area Friday at around 11:15 am (0215 GMT), registering 3.9 on the Richter scale, the Meteorological Agency reported, AFP says from Tokyo.

There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake's epicentre was about 100 kilometres (62 miles) north of Tokyo, the agency said.



Doctors of Sarajevo's Kosevo hospital help an injured Sarajevo resident Wednesday after he was wounded by shrapnel that exploded in downtown. Tensions have escalated between UN forces and Bosnian Serb troops on the Mount Igman road, the lifeline to Sarajevo, where the Serb troops have continued shelling of UN aid convoys. — AFP/UNB photo

Serb shells kill 8 in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, July 7: Shelling and sniper fire killed eight civilians in a UN-guarded Muslim enclave Thursday and early Friday, including a couple and their 6-year-old daughter who were waiting in line for water, reports AP.

A shell hit Hana Djorem, her husband, Bozo, and their daughter Magdalena as a water truck pulled up and started its motor. The girl died instantly; her parents died at a hospital.

The Bosnian Health Ministry said two other children were among the dead, and 18 civilians were wounded in the Sarajevo enclave, where people must decide daily whether to hide in their cellars, hungry and thirsty, or risk their lives to venture out for water and ever scarcer food.

Yeltsin's decree on Chechnya

MOSCOW, July 7: War or peace? President Boris Yeltsin can't seem to decide what he wants in Chechnya, and changes this week in his game plan have escalated a bitter battle inside the Kremlin on how to settle the conflict, reports AP.

Just as Russian and Chechen negotiators were making progress in talks to end the seven-month old war, Yeltsin issued a decree Tuesday permanently deploying troops in Chechnya, only to reverse the decision a day later.

Kremlin chaos is not new, but the struggle between hawks and doves in Yeltsin's inner circle could prolong the war and foil his goal of political stability in time for upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. Yeltsin's decree came as a sign of

Pakistan ready for dialogue to end Kashmir dispute: Benazir

KUALA LUMPUR, July 7: Visiting Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Islamabad was ready to hold a dialogue with India or at an international forum to end the dispute in the Indian-administered Muslim state of Kashmir, reports AFP.

"Pakistan seeks peaceful solution to this dispute and is ready for any meaningful dialogue bilateral or at an international forum," Benazir said in her speech at a state banquet hosted by her counterpart host Mahathir Muhammad late Thursday, a copy of which was obtained Friday.

Benazir, who arrived Thursday for a three-day official visit, said the unrest in Kashmir — India's only Muslim-majority state — and India's missile programme were constant threats to peace and security in South Asia.

India accuses her Islamic neighbour of fomenting militancy by arming and training the Muslim militants battling Indian security forces in Kashmir.

Pakistan denies the charge but extends moral and diplomatic support to what it describes as a legitimate struggle for self-determination.

Both countries routinely charge each other with staging cross-border attacks and infiltrating agents provocateurs to whip up insurgency. More than 12,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1989 when Muslim separatists stepped up a bloody drive against Indian rule.

"Since 1990, the people of Kashmir have suffered death and torture," Benazir told her Malaysian "brothers."

Even centuries-old shrines have not been spared and villages torched. Only because they demand the most fundamental and basic human right of self-determination," she said, adding that was a right promised to them by the international community in the UN Security Council resolutions.

Benazir Bhutto, accompanied by her family members on her second visit to Kuala Lumpur in six years, also charged India of "being bent upon starting a missile race in our region."

"India's missile programme which is nuclear capable, poses a serious threat to our security," she charged.

"The deployment of Agni and Prithvi missiles will increase the danger of nuclear proliferation in South

Asia," Benazir said, while appealing to "friendly countries like Malaysia to use moral force in getting India to desist from the arms race."

Pakistan, she said, would also count on Malaysia's support for Pakistan's participation at the summit of Asian and European leaders planned for next year.

Thailand is expected to host in March or April the Asian-EU summit mooted by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong last year to boost relations.

Another report from New Delhi adds: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao pledged today to secure the release of four western tourists abducted in Kashmir and ac-

cused Pakistani-backed Muslim militants of carrying out the kidnapping. Rao, speaking to the Press Trust of India news agency during a visit to the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, said he was closely monitoring the situation.

"The government is taking all necessary steps to get the hostages released," the prime minister added.

He expressed confidence the two Americans and two Britons kidnapped on Tuesday would be freed.

Rao accused Pakistani-backed Muslim militants of kidnapping the tourists on a trekking holiday in the Kashmir mountain resort of Pahalgam.

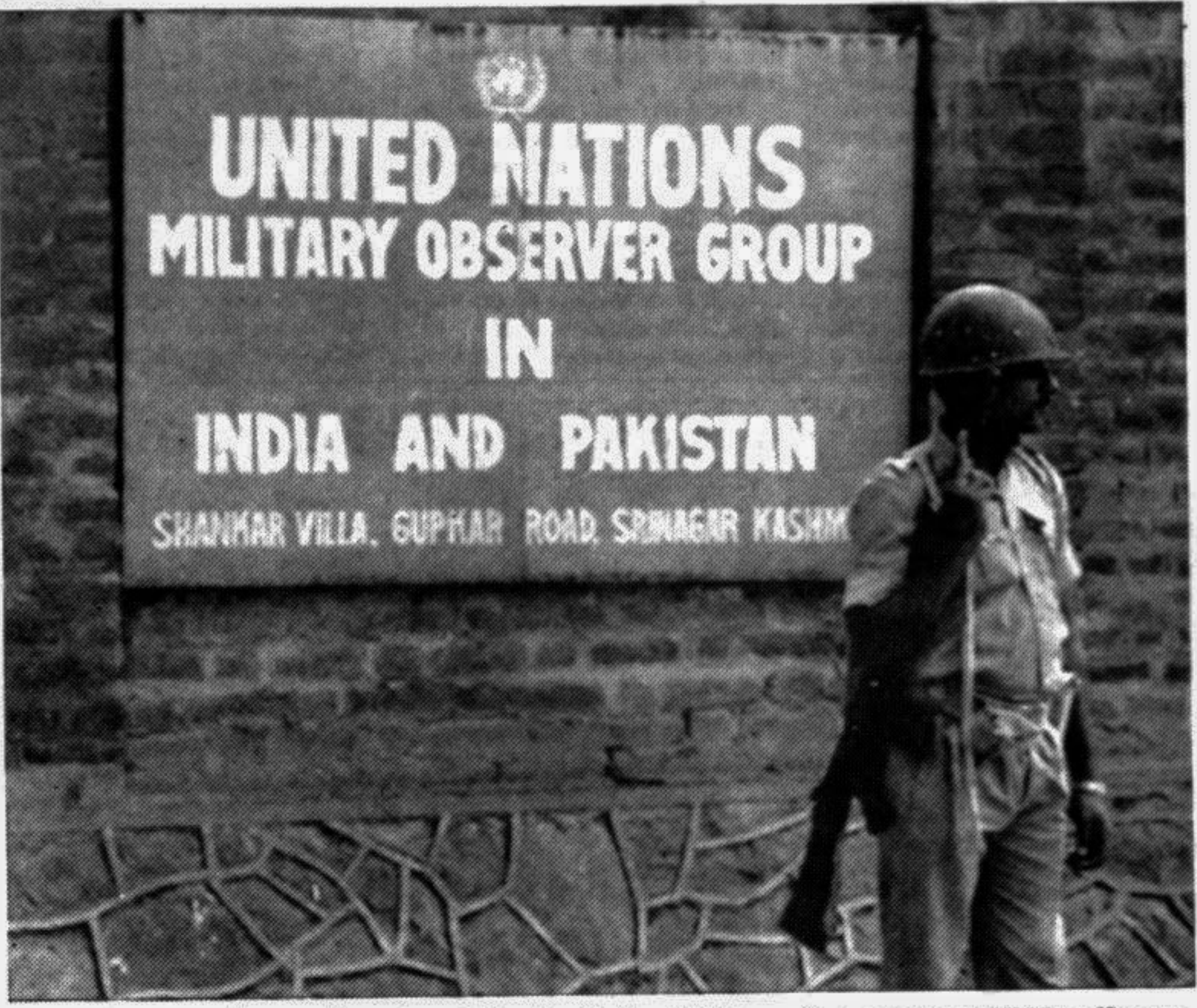
The Indian authorities have ac-

cused the pro-Pakistan Harkat-ul-Ansar separatist group of abducting Britons Keith Mangan and Paul Well Sand Americans John Donald and Fred Hutchings.

The Harkat, which has demanded the release of 21 imprisoned Muslim militants, kidnapped two Britons in the same area in June of last year, releasing them unharmed after 17 days in captivity.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Muslim militants battling the Indian security forces in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Pakistan denies the charge, saying it provides only moral and diplomatic support to what it describes as a legitimate struggle for self-determination.



A security guard is positioned outside the United Nations Organisation (UNO) office in northern Kashmir state on Thursday where two Americans and two British tourists were abducted by Kashmiri freedom fighters. The wives of the two of the tourists were released and cared for at the UNO office. — AFP/UNB photo

SA rules out ties with China at the cost of Taiwan

JOHANNESBURG, July 7: President Nelson Mandela said Thursday that South Africa would not sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan in order to establish relations with China, reports AFP.

South Africa was willing to set up ties with China, but not at the expense of links with Taiwan, Mandela told the South African press association in an interview on his flight between Japan and South Korea on Thursday.

Mandela arrived in Seoul on Thursday, the second leg of a far east trip aimed at drumming up trade and investment in South Africa.

Economic ties are believed by analysts to be the major factor in South Africa's reluctance to break ties with Taiwan, which is a major investor in South Africa and has promised significant development aid.

Taiwan has said it is not opposed to Pretoria having relations with both Chinese, but Beijing has emphatically ruled this out.

Manila firm to reach accord with MNLF

MANILA, July 7: Philippine government negotiators expressed confidence today that an agreement to end Muslim insurgency in the country south would be reached later this month despite the threat of Muslim extremist factions, reports AFP.

"We are aware of their existence but they are just small groups," said ambassador Manuel Yan, head of the government peace panel.

Rebel factions such as the Abu Sayyaf and the Islamic Command Council are not part of peace negotiations between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which are scheduled to resume on July 27.

Defence secretary Renato de Villa warned earlier that the growth of the breakaway groups "complicates the problem" of peace and order in the restive southern island of Mindanao.

But Yan said the support of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for the talks would hasten the restoration of peace in Mindanao.

US still against lifting UN sanctions on Iraq

WASHINGTON, July 7: The United States will oppose any efforts at the United Nations next week to lift sanctions on Iraq, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Thursday, reports AFP.

Iraqi officials haven't done nearly enough to warrant a lifting of the sanctions by the United Nations, Burns told journalists.

Certainly the United States will adhere to that position when the question comes before the UN Security Council, he added.

Burns refused to rule out the possibility of a US veto when the matter comes before the Security Council but said, "We wouldn't expect to have to act alone."

AP adds, the United States is prepared to veto any attempt by France and Russia to ease UN sanctions against Iraq, the State Department said Thursday.

"We will do whatever we have to do," spokesman Nicholas Burns said,

signalling a potential clash with the two allies when the United Nations opens debate on the economic sanctions next Wednesday.

"We'll just have to see how the debate goes," Burns said. "But right now, we don't believe that there is any basis to lift those sanctions," which were imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Burns' comments reflected deep skepticism within the administration that Iraq had dropped its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction or halted oppressive treatment of its own Shiite citizens.

The official raised questions, for example, about the disposition of 17 tons of an imported material for growing biological agents and about the whereabouts of 600 to 700 Kuwaitis and others who disappeared after Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Iraq has admitted that it secretly manufactured two kinds of deadly bacteria before the US-led war in the

Persian Gulf to liberate Kuwait. For four years, Iraq had insisted a remote desert factory used for the secret production was turning out high-grade animal feed.

The admission to a UN inspection commission may have been made on the advice of France and Russia, both eager to resume lucrative trade with Iraq that was suspended during the Gulf War and by continuing UN economic sanctions.

Renewing a US offer to permit Iraq to sell some of its oil worldwide provided the revenue was used for food and medicine, Burns accused Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein of callously rejecting a proposal that could assist his people. Nor is the administration impressed by Iraq's claim to have destroyed a large stockpile of germ-warfare agents in 1990.

Even so, France, Russia and other nations disagree with the relentless economic punishment the United Nations is visiting on Baghdad.

Sudan asks Arab League to help defuse crisis with Egypt

CAIRO, July 7: Sudan on Thursday went to the Arab League to present its case in a dispute with Egypt over the borderzone of Halaib where the two neighbours clashed last week, the Sudanese embassy here said, reports AFP.

The Sudanese government submitted a "memorandum of clarification", "the situation in Halaib and recent developments in this zone," the embassy said.

The Cairo-based Arab League confirmed it had received the document but gave no further details.

Sudan, which has already taken the dispute to the United Nations, asked the League on Monday to help defuse the growing crisis with Egypt which began when President Hosni Mubarak accused Khartoum of involvement in an assassination attempt against him on June 26.

Tension spilled over into armed skirmishes between Egyptian and Sudanese forces in Halaib on the Red Sea last week, which Khartoum says left three Sudanese dead and seven

wounded. The Egyptian army controls the 17,000 square kilometer (6,800 square mile) desert triangle but allows Sudan to deploy police there.

Sudan insists that the Halaib should be part of Sudanese territory because its inhabitants are of the same ethnic background as those in part Sudan.

The two sides nearly came to blows over Halaib in 1958 and their dispute flares up again at each crisis in their relations.

Mubarak expelled 70 Sudanese policemen from Halaib a week ago and threatened Sudan with retaliation following the attempt to kill him in Addis Ababa, although his political advisor ruled out a military strike.

Sudan's spiritual leader Hassan Al-Turabi has praised the Egyptian Islamic militant group the Jamaa Islamiyya, which claimed the attack.

Meanwhile, Iraq on Thursday condemned Egyptian attacks against Sudan and blamed the Cairo government for a build up of tension be-

tween the two neighbours. The recent crisis between Sudan and Egypt was caused by the Egyptian regime, Iraqi Labour Minister Latif Nasif Jasim told a press conference in Khartoum.

He said the Iraqi cabinet recently issued a statement criticising Egypt's role in the crisis, which was sparked when President Hosni Mubarak accused Sudan of involvement in an assassination attempt against him in Addis Ababa on June 26.

Egyptian and Sudanese forces clashed last week in a disputed Red Sea border zone in skirmishes which Khartoum says left three Sudanese dead.

"By creating this crisis Egypt was serving the interests of foreign circles, added Jasim who warned Tuesday that the Egypt-Sudan conflict could provide a pretext for foreign intervention."

Jasim arrived in Khartoum on Monday with a letter from President Saddam Hussein to his Sudanese counterpart Omar Al-Beshir.

Off the Record

Schwarzenegger loves ME

TEL AVIV: Hollywood's "Terminator" met Israel's peacemaker on Thursday and showed he was really a pacifist at heart, reports Reuter. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the star of such films as "Total Recall" and "True Lies", chatted on regional peace moves with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin while on a trip to Israel to promote a restaurant he partly owns. Rabin shared last year's Nobel peace prize for reaching an accord with long-time PLO foe Yasser Arafat. "I admire Israel and the whole Middle East region that now everyone is getting together and trying to make peace," Schwarzenegger told fans before releasing a dove into the air.

'Politicians not good in bed'

LONDON: British women don't find their politicians sexy — in fact a full 20 per cent surveyed by Options magazine said none of them would be good in bed, reports AFP.

But given a list of choices, the two leaders of the opposition won the biggest share of the bedside votes: 29 per cent wanted Labour leader Tony Blair and 19 per cent went for Liberal Democrat Paddy Ashdown.

John Major, the Prime Minister, only comes fourth with eight per cent, well after his Defence Secretary Michael Portillo at twelve per cent. The majority of readers said they would rather sleep with an actor: 35 per cent chose Mel Gibson and 15 per cent Harrison Ford. Only 13 per cent chose Hugh Grant, who was recently arrested on vice charges.

Asked what they looked for in a man, 52 per cent said they preferred men with a sense of humour, 31 per cent said intelligence and 29 per cent said they went in for good looks. The biggest turn off: bad breath 52 per cent.

Double coffin

HOHHOT: A 1,000-year-old tomb with a double coffin in it has been unearthed in Hulun Buir Meng in north China's inner Mongolia autonomous region, reports Xinhua.

The tomb, from the Liao dynasty (916-1125), is located some 3.9-meter underground. Experts say that the coffins are the first of their kind ever found in the area.

According to the experts, the tomb occupant was a middle-aged man who might have been a high-ranking officer, because gold, silver, bronze ware, an iron knife, how and quiver of arrows were found in the tomb. The skeleton had decayed but the clothes were well preserved.

Plain English Day

LONDON: Britain's civil servants won a rare accolade on Thursday, picking up seven out of eight awards for using plain English, reports Reuter. National Plain English Day, was launched by an independent organisation in 1987 to persuade people to erase "gobbledygook" from their writing.

"Thing before you ink" is one of the slogans used by the Plain English Campaign (PEC) this year and its director Chrissie Maher praised civil servants, in particular, for their response to the initiative.

"The response from the civil service has been tremendous and the standard of entries seems to get higher every year. It was very difficult to judge over 260 entries for these awards and single out just eight winners," Maher said.

Awards were given for a guide to a change in telephone codes, a managers' guide to customs, and an administration manual by the inland revenue tax-payers.

National Westminster Bank also received an award after topping a PIC review of banking communications.

'Di stunning but not stylish!'

LONDON: The queen of punk says Princess Diana is stunning but not stylish, reports AP.

"Perhaps one day she'll come to me," said Vivienne Westwood, an avant-garde and often outrageous British designer whose collection last winter featured bare bottoms. "I could make her the most stylish woman in the world."

Westwood, who pioneered the punk street style and has twice been voted Britain's Designer of the Year, said in an interview in the July issue of Woman and Home that Diana was "ruled by the trends."

"It's as though her clothes are supposed to tell you she's both a feminist and sexy at the same time. It's a compromise — and it doesn't work," she said.

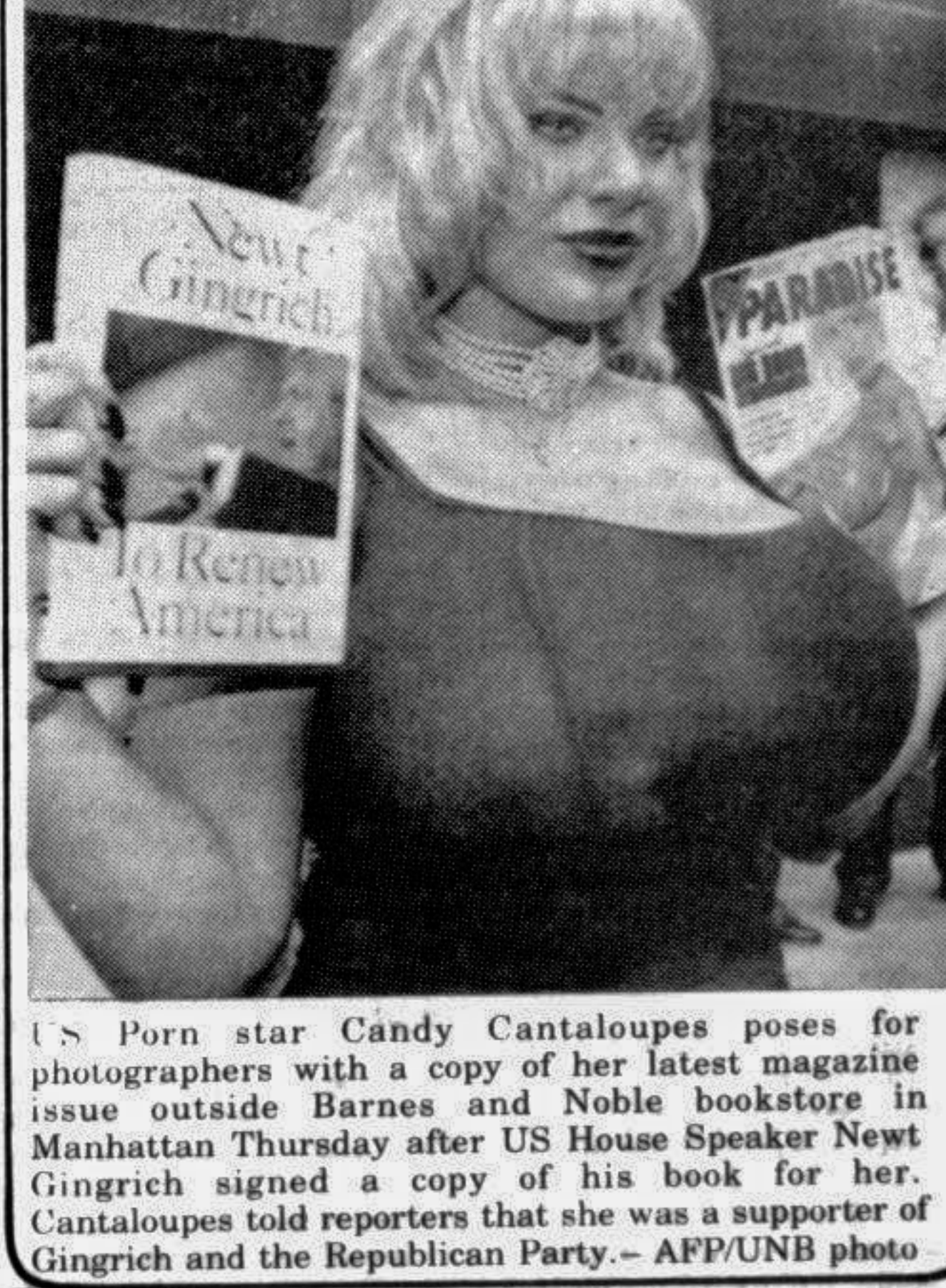
"I hate her shoes: those horrible little pumps that are neither one thing nor the other," said Westwood, who created ultra-high heel platform shoes that sent model Naomi Campbell toppling off the catwalk.

The 53-year-old designer was given an honour, Order of the British Empire, in 1992 for her fashion innovations. Many in the fashion world defended Diana.

"I think she has terrific style because she looks like a healthy, mature woman now," said Kimberly Fortier, communications director for Conde Nast which published such style icon magazines as Vogue. "As for her shoes, she walks around a lot more than a model on a catwalk and at least she doesn't fall over."

The British Fashion Council called the princess "an ambassador par excellence for the British fashion industry."

Eleanor Lambert, the doyenne of American fashion who compiles the International Best Dressed List, had nothing but praise for Diana.



US Porn star Candy Cantaloupes poses for photographers with a copy of her latest magazine issue outside Barnes and Noble bookstore in Manhattan Thursday after US House Speaker Newt Gingrich signed a copy of his book for her. Cantaloupes told reporters that she was a supporter of Gingrich and the Republican Party. — AFP/UNB photo

Yeltsin's decree on Chechnya escalates feud inside Kremlin

troops invaded Chechnya in December to crush the breakaway republic's independence drive.

Yeltsin agreed to high-level peace talks only under pressure after Chechen rebels seized 2,000 hostages last month in the southern city of Budyonovsk, igniting a political confrontation with parliament. It was only Thursday that a Yeltsin representative was named to the negotiating team in Chechnya.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who initiated the peace talks, and the doves appeared the early victors of Budyonovsk, while the security forces that bungled a rescue operation appeared to have weakened.

But Yeltsin was very careful about

alienating the party of war and has softened blows dealt last week to the security forces.

Former Interior Minister Viktor Yerin got a plum new job Wednesday as deputy head of the Foreign Intelligence Service just six days after he was fired for incompetence. Anatoly Kulkov, the tough commander of Russian troops in Chechnya, was named as the new Interior Minister.

So far, Yeltsin has stood firmly behind Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and the army, which continues to wage war against Chechen rebels and seems prepared to fight for absolute victory.

The balance of forces on the top between supporters and opponents of the peace talks remains unclear.

the weekly Obshchaya Gazeta said. "Until one of these parties gets the upper hand, success at the talks doesn't mean anything, no matter how hard the negotiators try."

The peace talks appeared in trouble when Yeltsin issued a hawkish decree authorising the permanent deployment of troops in Chechnya.

The decree had incensed Russian negotiators, who said it jeopardised the fragile peace process. Negotiator Arkady Volsky said Wednesday Yeltsin had promised to rescind the order.

Then, the decree drama took yet another twist on Thursday when Yeltsin's chief press spokesman, Sergei Medvedev, said the order on stationing troops would not be rescinded.

Turkish troops cross Iraqi border again

ANKARA, July 7: Turkish troops fighting to crush an 11 year insurgency by Kurdish guerrillas have again crossed the border into northern Iraq to try to flush the rebels from their hideouts, reports Reuter.

A military spokesman said 57 guerrillas had been killed in the operation the biggest cross border push since a six week drive launched in March which Ankara insisted had dealt the rebels a big blow. There was no word on Turkish losses.

The military said on Thursday that Turkish troops had been crossing the contentious border for two days and were moving in and out of Iraq in pursuit of rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).